

Enhancement-led Institutional Review of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

Outcome Report

June 2018

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About the Enhancement-led Institutional Review method

The QAA website explains the method for [Enhancement-led Institutional Review \(ELIR\)](#) and has links to the ELIR handbook and other informative documents.¹ You can also find out more about the [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education \(QAA\)](#).²

Further details about ELIR can be found in an accompanying [brief guide](#),³ including an overview of the review method, information about review teams, and explanations of follow-up action.

About this review

This is the Outcome Report of the ELIR conducted by QAA at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. The review took place as follows: Planning Visit on 26 April 2018 and Review Visit on 18-21 June 2018. The review was conducted by a team of five reviewers:

- Professor Tuomas Auvénin (International Reviewer)
- Professor Hilary Grainger (Academic Reviewer)
- Dr Steve Halfyard (Academic Reviewer)
- Gavin Lee (Coordinating Reviewer)
- Joy Vamvakari (Student Reviewer)

This report sets out the threshold judgement formed by the ELIR team on:

- the current and likely future effectiveness of the institution's arrangements for managing academic standards and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience.

The threshold judgement for this report can be found on page 3, followed by commendations and recommendations.

A more detailed [Technical Report](#) is also available for this review.⁴ The Technical Report sets out the team's findings under each heading in the ELIR 4 method.

¹ About ELIR:

www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/en/reviewing-higher-education-in-scotland/enhancement-led-institutional-review.

² About QAA: www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland.

³ Brief Guide to ELIR: www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/reports/brief-guide-to-elir-method.pdf

⁴ Technical Report: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/quality-assurance-reports/Royal-Conservatoire-of-Scotland

About the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS or the Conservatoire) is Scotland's national conservatoire with a strong international reputation. It is also one of the busiest performance centres in Scotland with over 500 public performances per year. Since its foundation in 1847 as the Glasgow Athenaeum, it has evolved to offer specialised and intensive education in all of the performing and production arts: dance, drama, music (classical, jazz, traditional), production and film, as well as performing arts education.

In 2017-18, the Conservatoire had 1,212 degree students from 63 countries. In the same year, it had 3,800 non-degree students studying in its Junior Conservatoire and a range of Transitions and outreach activities. The Conservatoire has a total headcount of 855 staff of whom 118 are full-time and 267 are part-time academic staff. A further 256 are part-time academic staff involved in the delivery of pre-higher education provision.

The Strategic Plan 2015-2020, 'Delivering a Defining Performance' sets out the Conservatoire's vision to be 'Scotland's globally-recognised and inspirational leader in learning for the performing arts' and includes four strategic pillars:

- driving focused excellence
- promoting equality and diversity
- advancing lifelong learning
- embracing [the RCS] role as a national and international performing arts institution.

Threshold judgement about the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland has **effective** arrangements for managing academic standards and the student learning experience.

This is a positive judgement, which means that the Conservatoire meets sector expectations in securing the academic standards of its awards and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience it provides, currently and into the future. This judgement confirms there can be public confidence in the Conservatoire's awards and in the quality of the learning experience it provides for its students.

Commendations

- 1 The Conservatoire is commended for the following areas of good practice.
- 2 **Culture of promoting equality and diversity** - the Conservatoire has a culture of promoting equality and diversity among its staff and students. A clear example is the development of the BA Performance in British Sign Language and English programme which is a unique offer in the UK and has brought many benefits including contributing to the culture of support for students and staff across the institution.
- 3 **Widening access** - there is substantial strategic commitment and a range of support in place to promote student access to the Conservatoire. There is a wide variety of practical assistance for individual students provided on a systematic basis.
- 4 **Student-centred, personalised experience** - the Conservatoire offers a strongly student-centred, personalised experience and is responsive to student feedback. Students are able to draw on the full range of disciplines with systematic processes in place for supporting their curriculum choices.
- 5 **Proto-professional environment** - students in a conservatoire are immersed in an environment which is very close to the professions they are preparing to enter. In adopting and promoting this approach, the Conservatoire has established a shared understanding between staff and students of what it means to combine professional skills with higher education.
- 6 **Collaboration across disciplines** - the Conservatoire has a strategic approach to inter-disciplinary collaboration inside and outside the curriculum. This is most visible in the imaginative extra-curricular Bridge Week and in the collaborative modules which are embedded in the curriculum.
- 7 **Positive impact of educational development** - staff who have studied the in-house PgCert and MEd programmes have had a significant positive impact in supporting educational development across the Conservatoire. The impact of the MEd has been realised more widely where students, typically practising artists and teachers, have had a positive role leading educational development in the creative arts professions.

Recommendations

- 8 The Conservatoire is asked to consider the following recommendations.
- 9 **Alignment of institutional strategies** - continue with plans to ensure institutional strategies are aligned more closely with the Strategic Plan and with each other.
- 10 **Communication of key institutional policies** - improve the communication of key institutional policies and regulations to staff and students by considering their content, format and mode of dissemination.
- 11 **Assessment** - establish an institutional strategy for assessment and bring greater clarity and consistency to the design and delivery of assessments including assessment weighting and marking practices.
- 12 **Approach to evaluation and review** - reflect on the approach to self-evaluation and review to ensure the Conservatoire is able to optimise the learning from its review activity while streamlining the burden of conducting multiple reviews.
- 13 **Use of the virtual learning environment** - ensure there is more consistent use of learning technologies across the curriculum and consider how these could be used to promote engagement and to facilitate sharing key information between staff and students.

What happens next?

- 14 QAA Scotland will continue to engage with the institution through the annual discussion visits which, among other matters, consider the ways in which institutions respond to the ELIR outcomes.
- 15 One year after publication of the ELIR Outcome and Technical Reports, institutions are asked to provide a Follow-up Report to indicate how they are responding to the outcomes of ELIR. The final version of the institution's Follow-up Report is published on the QAA website. Institutions also engage in a range of enhancement and development activities including Focus On projects where institutions work collaboratively to improve policy and practice relating to topics that are frequently occurring in ELIR outcomes.

Further information

- 16 A more detailed [Technical Report](#) is also available for this review. The Technical Report sets out the team's findings under each heading in the ELIR 4 method.
- 17 This review and its findings relate to the institution as a whole and do not provide information about individual programmes of study or subjects. For further information about those, contact the institution or visit its [website](#).
- 18 University sector institutions in Scotland also engage in systematic Enhancement Theme activity. Further information about that work, which has a sector-wide and institutional focus, can be found on the [Enhancement Themes website](#).
- 19 Further information about QAA Scotland and the enhancement-led approach, including the ELIR method, can be found on the [QAA website](#).
- 20 For further information about the Scottish Funding Council see www.sfc.ac.uk.

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